

# From the Arctic.

[From our Extra, October 22.]

## Immense Destruction of Property.

## A Crushing Blow to the Whaling Business.

## 33 Ships Lost!

## 1000 Shipwrecked Seamen!

## Circumstantial Account from Ship Masters.

By the arrival Monday, Oct. 23, of the Hawaiian whaling bark *Arctic*, Captain Tripp, we are in receipt of truly distressing news from the whaling fleet lately cruising in the Arctic Ocean. The greater portion of the fleet, numbering over thirty vessels, has been caught in the ice, and hopelessly crushed or found fast so that they had to be abandoned. Fortunately, the weather was such that all the crews were safely got on board the vessels which were outside the pack, although in some instances, the utmost expedition had to be used to save life. In the case of the *Roman*, as described to us by one of her company, the sight must have been fearfully interesting. The ice caught the ship on each side, and lifted her up bodily, keel up. Relaxing its grip for an instant, the ship settled between the icy jaws of the foe, when coming together again, she was crushed like an eggshell, into atoms, and as the spasmodic relaxation again occurred, she disappeared, leaving not a vestige of the lately noble vessel in sight, forty-five minutes from the time the ice first closed upon her.

It is an open question as to whether any of these ships will be found on the return of spring, in a condition to be saved. It was considered probable that in the first northerly gale, they would all be destroyed by the moving heavy ice. Besides, the natives, who are numerous in the neighborhood, would, without delay, strip them of everything movable.

For the following circumstantial and highly interesting account of this great disaster, the effects of which will be severely felt in the homes and business circles of the East, as well as here in San Francisco, we are indebted to Captains Tripp, of the *Arctic*, Kelley of the *Gay Head*, Allen, of the *Minerva*, Bliven, of the *Edis*, Swift, Loveland, of the *Reindeer*, Nye, of the *Eugenia*, and Newbury, of the *Paia*.

About the 1st of May, 1871, the whalships began to arrive at the ice south of Cape Thaddeus. They found plenty of ice, and closely packed so that they were strong from the northeast most of the month of May. About the 1st of June the ice opened some, and the ships up in sight of Cape Navarin. Here five or six whales were taken; a good many were heard spouting among the heavy ice, but they soon left. The fore part of June, the winds were light and variable with a good deal of fog. About the middle of the month the ice opened and the fleet pushed to the north. A few whales were taken and picked up in crossing the Anadur Sea. By the time the ships got to Cape Bering and Plover Bay the whales had all passed through the straits. The bark *Orion* was stove and put into Plover Bay to try and repair. The fleet passed through Bering Straits between the 18th and 20th of June, some of them taking on board the crew of the *Japan*, which was wrecked at Cape East last fall, not seeing any whales and finding large quantities of ice.

The whole fleet now engaged in catching walrus; there were very shy and scarce in comparison to former seasons, the boats frequently going 15 or 20 miles in the ice to get them; there was a good deal of fog in June and July, while they were walrusing; and also large bodies of ice. The east shore being unapproachable until the very last of July. The latter part of July they had some strong winds from S. E. and N. E. This broke up the walrus catching, and the fleet now pushed to N. E. for Icy Cape. The ice began to disappear from the east shore south of Cape Lisburne; the fleet pushed on to the westward, the main body of ice being in about the lat. of 69° 10' or 15'; they followed the ice into the east shore; they found a clear strip of water running to N. E. along the land. In this clear water, they worked up to within a few miles of Icy Cape and some of them anchored, not being able to proceed any farther on account of the ice lying on Blossom Shoals; at this time the wind was blowing strong from the N. E. for several days.

On the 6th of August the wind moderated and the ice started off the shoals. Several ships got underway and passed the shoals, and in a few days the most of the fleet were north of Blossom Shoals. The weather was good, and they worked to northeast as far as Wainwright Inlet; here they found whales, and a number were taken at once, but the ice being very heavy and closely packed, a great many were lost. Still the prospect looked very favorable, and the ships were entertained of making a large season's catch. All the ships either anchored or made fast to the heavy ground ice. Whaling was now carried on for several days, the boats cruising among open ice, but on the 11th of August a large number of boats were caught in the ice by the wind shifting, and setting the ice on shore. The wind was from the west, and the ships were obliged to get underway to keep from being jammed in the ice, and work in shore under the lee of the ground ice. With considerable difficulty they succeeded in saving their boats by hauling them a long distance over the ice, some of them being badly stove by so doing, but they were all saved finally. The ice kept setting on shore steadily, and the ships kept fleeing into shoal water to avoid being stove, and some of them were wrecked, but were easily got off again. On the 15th the ice stopped, having grounded, leaving an open strip of water along the land as far as Point Barrow. Boats were kept off whaling every day, they saw and heard plenty of whales among the heavy ice, but could not get to them at this time. They had a great deal of fog at times, clearing off for a short time. All this time the ships were lying in the open land, as they expected it would be a strong northeast wind that blew. In the meantime reports were brought of plenty of whales being seen off Sea Horse Islands, and several ships got boats up there with orders to catch and out the whales on the ice, (they carrying everything necessary for so doing) and tow the blubber to the ships, there was no chance to get there with the ships, on account of the ice and shoal water. Four whales were taken in this way, after a great deal of labor and hardship in sleeping out on the cold shore and being in the ice. On the 25th August it blew a strong northeast gale, and the ice opened and went off the coast. On the 27th had good weather, whales were

quite plenty, and a number were taken. The ships all got underway, and stood off shore and commenced whaling, every one thinking the ice was going off for good, and every opportunity was taken advantage of to catch whales. On the 28th, the weather and light variable winds. On the 29th, light southwest winds, which freshened towards the latter end of the day, setting the ice in shore so fast that most of the ships were caught in the pack. The rest retreated in shore ahead of the ice.

Here they anchored in from 3 to 4 fathoms water, the ice coming in and the small ice packing around the ships. By the strong current running to the N. E., the large heavy floe grounded in the shoal water; inside of this the ships lay, or at least the most of them, and those who did not get in kept working in as they had a chance, to keep from being stove. At this time it began to snow and they had several storms and winds from S. to N. W. Here they were all jammed close together, some not having room to swing clear of each other. On the 7th of Sept. the bark *Roman* was crushed by the ice. She having got caught while cutting a whale. She drifted helplessly with the ice as far as Sea Horse Islands, and was there caught between two heavy floes of ice, one of the floes was ground, and an immense floe of several miles in extent came against her from off shore, crushing her like an eggshell in 45 minutes. She sunk head foremost leaving her mizenmast and her stern out of water, the ice having held her up until it separated. The Captain, officers and crew escaping over the ice with the boats, and not saving scarcely anything, except the clothes they had on. The crew were received on board the other ships. On the 24th Sept. the brig *Comet* was crushed in the heavy ice; her crew were taken on board the other ships, and cared for. It now became evident that the ice was setting on shore very heavily, the open strip of water became narrower every day, and no possible chance to get out. Still no one thought there would be any difficulty of getting out the first N. E. gale. On the 8th of Sept. the bark *Awashonsk* was crushed between the heavy floe and the ground ice. Her crew were also received on board the other ships. As day after day passed and no signs of the ice opening, the masters of the ships became anxious about the loss of time, as the season was passing away. They were unwilling to believe that the ice would not go off shore, as in all their former experiences it had done at this time of the year. Nothing would be seen but one solid body of ice off shore as far as the eye could see, except the narrow strip in shore which was from 200 yards to half a mile wide. The ships were lying, some jammed in the ice and some in open water, all the way from Point Belcher to 2 or 3 miles south of Wainwright Inlet. During all this time, every one was anxiously expecting a N. E. gale, but instead the wind continued from S. E. to N. W. Always light from S. E., and fresh from N. W. This kept the ice packing together more closely every day. The Masters of the ships now became seriously anxious about getting out of this perilous situation. The danger of their situation was apparent to every one, and as the season was advancing, there was great danger of being frozen in, as the ice was making daily in the open strip of water. Notice was now given, and a meeting was held by all the masters, in order to concert some measures for the safety of their crews, in case they found it impossible to escape from their dangerous situation. It was decided to lighten the brig *Kohola*, and try to get her over the bar at Wainwright Inlet, on which there was 5 or 6 feet of water. This was done. She was hauled alongside the *Charlotte* of San Francisco, and her oil and stores landed on her deck, and she was then found to draw 9 feet of water. However, she was taken down the coast in the narrow strip made to get her over the shoal water. An attempt was made to get her over the shoal water. This they found to be impossible, as she drew too much water, and this was given up. At this time the *Charlotte* was fitted out under the command of Capt. Fraser, to go down the coast until they came to the open sea, and then to try and find any of the ships which might have got out of the ice, or kept out, as it was known there were seven vessels to the south. This was deemed expedient, as they were afraid that they would leave the east shore and go to the westward, and so remain in ignorance of the situation of the rest of the fleet. He succeeded in finding the distressed ships, as long as their anchors would hold them. Still hoping the ice would open and let them out, in the meantime, Capt. Redfield of the brig *Victoria* tried to get his vessel off over the bar by lighting her, but without succeeding. On the night of the 9th of Sept., the weather was calm, and the clear water around the ships froze over, and it was with great difficulty that a whale boat could be got through it. The boats had to be cooped around the bows to keep the ice from cutting through the planking. No time was now lost in providing provisions by the boats to the south, as they were apprehensive that their retreat by the boats might be cut off, and it might be that they would be obliged to travel by land to where the ships were anchored. It being well known among every ship's company that there was not provisions enough to last over 3 or 4 months at the most. In case the ships escaped from the ice these provisions could be taken on board again, for all hoped against hopes to the last. It was hard to entertain any thoughts of leaving their ships, there being no harbor where they could winter, even had they provisions enough to do. And more, they knew that if the ships did not get out they would either be crushed or driven ashore by the ice the first northwest gale.

On the 13th of September another meeting was held by the Masters, the painful fact having forced itself upon the mind of every one, that in order to save the lives of their crews they would have to abandon their ships. None but those similarly situated could tell how difficult it was for them to arrive at this painful conclusion, and to winter was utterly impossible, as their provisions would not last one-third of the winter, which is nine months in duration in these latitudes. And then to what purpose could it be done, as there was no place of safety for the ships; had they been in a harbor some of the crews might have been left to take care of them, and keep the natives from destroying them. But as they lay in the open sea exposed to every storm, the chances were that they would all be destroyed by the ice. Under these trying circumstances they were forced to come to the conclusion to abandon the ships to save their lives, and the colors were accordingly set as agreed on—at the mast-heads—to notify all the ships companies to get ready to leave on the 14th of Sept. The Masters of the distressed vessels knew if they were caught by the bad weather, the chances were that they would never get back again, after being blown off. Thus, although they were ready to stay any length of time by their ships as long as they could be sure of a ship to take them off at the last moment, and that time had now arrived, and as every one regretted leaving their ships, still there was no alternative. Satisfaction and death awaited them should they be obliged to stay; accordingly, boats were loaded with such provisions and clothing as were absolutely necessary, and by 4 P. M. every ship's company had left, and were on their way south. As they made their way down the coast they found the ice much worse than they had any idea of, and a great deal of shoal water besides, so that even if they had succeeded in getting the ships over the bar at Wainwright Inlet, they never could have got them in the clear water south! At night they camped on the beach, and at daylight on the 15th, they proceeded on their way to Icy Cape; it blew strong from the south, and when they came in sight of the ships they found considerable difficulty in getting off to them, as the boats were loaded deep in the ice and the barks *Arctic*, *Miner*, and *Progress*, had each an anchor in trying to hold on to take them on board, they were very

kindly received on board these ships—seven in number as before mentioned. The boats were cut adrift, as it was impossible to save them, the ships being so crowded. On the 16th, the last boats, crews were taken on board, and the wind blowing strong from NW, they weighed anchor and steered to SW, it having been agreed between the Captains of the ships to proceed to Plover Bay, and there get water and wood to last them on the passage to the Sandwich Islands. This was done by five of the ships, the *Arctic*, *Progress*, *Midas*, *Lagoda* and *Europa*, which arrived there on the 24th, and sailed again on the 25th. The distance traversed by the boats after abandoning the ships before reaching the ships South of Icy Cape, was about 70 miles; the ice being in one solid body all the way to Icy Cape, leaving a narrow strip of clear water along the beach the entire distance—but also very shoal. Annexed is a list of the names of the abandoned ships and the amount of oil each ship had taken up to the time they were lost, and as they lay in rotation along the ice and land:

Concordia, 650 barrels; Gay Head, 530 do; George, 300 do; John Wells, 300 do; Massachusetts, 350 do; J. D. Thompson, 100 sperm and 770 do; Contest, 500 do; E. Morgan, 150 do; Champion, 275 sperm and 300 do; Henry Taber, 300 do; E. Swift, 700 do; Florida, 550 do; O. Crocker, 200 do; Navy, 280 sperm and 400 do; Reindeer, 800 do; Seneca, 450 do; Fanny, 300 do; Geo. Howard, 500 do; Monticello, 270 sperm and 630 do; Carolina, 700 do; Juliet, 100 do; Kohola, 150 do; Eugenia, 250 do; Pauline, 40 sperm and 200 do; Awashonsk, clean; T. Dickason, 550 do; Minerva, 130 do; Wm. Ritch, 200 do; Mary, 300 do; Roman, 650 do; Comet, 30 do. The following are the names of the vessels saved and the amount of oil taken by each: *Arctic*, 480 barrels; *Progress*, 250 do; *Chance*, 220 sperm and 280 whale; *Daniel Webster*, 250 do; *Lagoda*, 725 do; *Europa*, 330 do; *Midas*, 450 do, 140 sperm.

## Terrible Shipwreck and Loss of Eleven Lives!

By the arrival Sunday, Oct. 22d, of the steamer *Moses Taylor*, we have the following distressing account of human suffering and loss of life at sea. The brig *Shelchoff*, Captain Hopkins, it will be remembered, took a cargo of cattle from these islands to Tahiti in December of last year.

The following statement from the pen of H. M. Whitney, Esq., who was a passenger by the steamer, will be read with absorbing interest. On Thursday, Oct. 17, at 8 A. M., a sail was discovered by the wheelman on the steamer *Moses Taylor*. The vessel lay directly in the steamer's track, and appeared to be disabled, having but one mast standing, and only her lower topmast running before a fresh south-east wind. On approaching her, it proved to be a brig, water-logged, with her mainmast carried away, apparently deserted, no persons appearing in sight on board. A sail spread over the foremast, and a tent rigged in the foretop cross-trees, showed that the crew had occupied the vessel for some time. At every lurch, the sea made a clean breach over the vessel from stem to stern. To all appearance it was a wreck which had long been water-logged, and her crew taken off by some passing vessel. Her stern was broken away, the bulwarks on both sides gone, and her sails flying from the foremast in rags.

On reaching the wreck, the steamer stopped, and Captain Bennett sent off a boat to ascertain whether any persons were on board, and if none, whether any record could be found respecting her. The sea being quite rough, the brig lurched heavily, and the boat appeared to her with some difficulty. She was boarded, however, by the third officer and a seaman from the steamer, who immediately went aloft into the foretop, and finding no one went into the foremast, where they discovered a weak, emaciated man, who exclaimed, as he saw them: "Great God Almighty! I am saved!" He was lifted into the boat, and an attempt was made to get him to the steamer, with him being a small canvas bag containing a nautical almanac, and a vital inclosing a sheet of paper, with the date of the wreck and names of the crew and passengers.

It proved to be the American brig *Shelchoff*, 213 tons register, of San Francisco, bound to Callao with a cargo of lumber. The survivor was Capt. Luder Hopken, the last of twelve persons on board at the time of the disaster. The brig was caught in a cyclone on the night of July 3, the same date of the solar eclipse. Soon after midnight, when the cyclone was at its height, she was thrown on her beam-ends, and found to be rapidly filling, and in order to prevent a total loss of the vessel and her cargo, the crew, with the aid of the boat, worked with some time was allowed to save any provisions or clothing from the cabin, and the crew were obliged to retreat to the foretop to prevent being washed overboard, as every wave made a clean breach over her. The mate, Mr. Johnson, died first, six days after the disaster. Two half-barrels of dynamite, a half-barrel of tongues, and a box of China starch were fished up out of the hold, but the drinking water was all found to be brackish. The salmon, tongues, starch, and a few fish caught with a hook from time to time, and occasionally a little rain-water caught in a sail, and always more or less brackish from the salt spray, were all that the ship's company had to subsist on.

Capt. Hopken's account of the sufferings of his men and passengers is a most heart-rending one. After the death of the mate, on the 9th of July, none occurred till Sept. 6, when they began to become delirious and weak from lack of food, and several died or jumped overboard in their delirium. Boils and disease, induced by hunger and salt-water, added to the intensity of their sufferings. Nine or ten days before the steamer rescued him, Captain Hopken states that a bark ran down to the wreck, hove to for a few minutes, and then squared away without sending off a boat or making any effort to rescue the lives of those on board, of whom there were then eight living. The bark came so near that persons could be seen moving about on her deck. Those on the brig were so weak that they could not move, but hoping to attract attention, their feelings as they saw the bark square away, when so near them, may better be imagined than described. Their last hope being gone, they lay down, and one after another died or leaped overboard. The bark displayed no flag, and all the Captain H. can recollect of her appearance was that she had a new bright sparker set.

Soon after the disaster occurred, Captain H. set the foremast and jib (the only sails used), and rigged the rudder so as to steer the wreck from the foretop. This was accomplished by running the rudder-ropes through a block aft, and then carrying them forward to the foretop. In this way the brig's course was shaped towards these islands tolerably correct, without compass or chart. The accident occurred in N. lat. 16 and W. long. 117, about 320 miles south-west of Cape St. Lucas. The wreck was fished up in N. lat. 26.40, W. long. 148.52, about 400 miles north-east of Hawaii, showing that they had run nearly 2,000 miles in 109 days. The brig sailed from San Francisco June 22d, with 210,000 feet of lumber on board. The deck was swept off by a heavy sea soon after she became water-logged, and a portion of the lumber in the hold worked out the stern, which was carried away. What remains is probably rendered worthless by the worms. The foremast was loose, and will be carried away in the first gale. So that the vessel and cargo may be set down as a total loss. Too much praise cannot be given to Captain Bennett, of the *Moses Taylor*, for sending a boat from the steamer to examine the wreck, which, to all appearance, was abandoned, and not one out of ten shipmasters would probably have thought it a waste of time to stop and examine her condition. But his humane course has saved the life of one person, whose gratitude no words can express. If the passage of the steamer has been a long one, caused by constant beating about in the ice, it is to be remembered that the usual course, it is a satisfaction to know that an all-wise Providence directed the winds and guided the helm, and led to the rescue of a human being, who had existed for 109 days literally without bread and water, and endured sufferings which no mortal could survive. The facts given in this narrative should teach shipmasters never to pass a wreck without ascertaining, if possible, whether any persons remain on board.

In conclusion, Captain Hopken desires me to express his heartfelt thanks to Captain Bennett, Dr. Woodbridge and Mr. Deas, who so kindly nursed him, and to the passengers on board the *Moses Taylor*, who have contributed so liberally to his wants. HENRY M. WHITNEY, Passenger.

The following paper was prepared by Captain Hopken Sept. 10th, on board the brig, to be left in case no one survived. It gives the list of crew and passengers:

American brig *Shelchoff*, of San Francisco, was water-logged on the 3d of July, 1871, in a hurricane, lat. 16° north and long. 117° west. Was about till Sept. —. This was written on the 10th Sept. 1871, 70 days after another. Capt. Luder Hopken, Master, San Francisco; Mate, T. Johnson, of Schleswig Holstein; Second Mate, James MacCarty, Port Petrie, Midgishore; Steward, Philip Dunn, San Francisco. Seamen—Lerdore Polce, Rebosto Sicilia, Mitchell Velago, Bajero Calabria, Italy; Andrew Larsen, Sweden; Lona Lewis Nessen, Flensburg, Germany. Cabin Passengers—Ashley C. C. Charles Davis, San Francisco; Charles Kurtz, Tubingen, Germany—[New York papers copy]; Bartholomew Clavell, native of Charleston, Department of Sardinia, (France?) Written on board the brig *Shelchoff*, Monday, Sept. 10, 1871. We have suffered hard from hunger and thirst. Crew, passengers and officers beg to send this to San Francisco, California, and publish in the papers. In the Nautical Almanac were found the following entries:—13 July, Cyclone; vessel water-logged. Sept. 6—Andrew Larsen died. " 18—Lewis Nessen died. " 22—Bart. Clavell died. " 21—On the wreck 80 days; 92 days from San Francisco. No rain. Nothing to eat. Saturday, Sept. 30—We are on the wreck 80 days. Four dead. Please advertise this in papers. All hands dead, except the Captain and one passenger—Crane.

A CALED. HONOLULU, H. I., October, 1871. To Capt. N. T. Bennett, of S. S. *Moses Taylor*: Dear Sir—I desire by this, the only means in my power, to return to you my sincere and heartfelt thanks for the Christian charity and great gallantry shown by yourself, your officers and crew, in rescuing me from a deplorable and hopeless position upon the wreck of the brig *Shelchoff*, upon Wednesday, October 19th, 1871, after I had given up all hopes of life, having already passed one hundred and eight days upon the water-logged wreck of my vessel, and seen one after another, my crew and passengers perish of thirst or exposure.

I wish Sir, you would thank the boat's crew that took me from the wreck, and also all your officers for their kindness and attention during the time I passed on board the *Moses Taylor*, and the passengers for their kindness in subscribing so liberally for my benefit. Rest assured Sir, that I shall never, while I live, forget your kindness, and that my future life may be as successful and fortunate as you deserve. I remain Sir, with sincere gratitude, your obedient servant, LUDER HOPKEN, Late Master of the *Shelchoff*.

Effects of the Fire. The great fire in Chicago by which perhaps \$100,000,000 worth of buildings and merchandise has been destroyed, is a great calamity for the whole nation. But it fully illustrates the excellence of that modern system of insurance which spreads the loss over this country and Europe, by making the capital of all responsible for the local loss of a few. At the first bluish Chicago has lost perhaps \$300,000,000, a very heavy loss, but of that \$300,000,000 has been insured, that is for a small premium, most of the insurance companies of the Union and Great Britain have agreed to pay the amount. It results that Chicago in the next ninety days must receive \$250,000,000 in cash, to be applied to the restoration of the ruined buildings. Of the uninsured balance of merchandise the merchants of New York and elsewhere who sell on credit will have to bear their proportion. The insurance effort in this crisis companies in excess of their assets will not be realized in all probability. But from other sources it will be available. The San Francisco Fire Companies, whose aggregate assets are \$5,500,000, have of late taken risks in Chicago, and these risks have been estimated as high as \$3,000,000, in legal tender, but closer investigation is reducing the amount and it is very possible that \$2,500,000 may ultimately be required to pay over the next ninety days. This amount is to be realized from the securities of the companies, which are of the best description, and will be available to employ \$2,500,000, if it should prove so much, may be a slight rise in the rates for money on long terms. That is all that the payment, by San Francisco, of that amount of money could effect. Larger amounts of money have been loaned to Chicago, drawn from the market to feed gold and other speculations in New York, without attracting attention at all, and during the last year millions of dollars for the purchase of mines and the use of railroad have come into this State without public notice. When men's minds are excited by an unusual calamity, the wildest forebodings are indulged in, and we are sorry to say, promoted by men who seek in the depreciation of property, favorable investments. There is no denying that the loss is a heavy one to the local companies, but they have all held meetings of Directors, and only with one result, viz: to meet the case fairly and squarely, to discharge all claims and to continue business as usual. The card of the Phoenix Company will be found in another column. The Union, Freeman's Fund and the others meet the matter in a similar spirit. There are no claims but the claims upon San Francisco, as she has always met her liabilities, the public will rally to the support of those companies who have valued their property, financial integrity and ability abroad. There may become reorganization of some of these companies, and the discussion of the advisability of doing a foreign business may come up. There are those who think the home business should be adhered to but it is probable that the Chicago companies are not of that opinion. Experienced underwriters advocate a multiplicity of small risks extended over a large number of years. The general result is now, notwithstanding this most terrible fire that the world has known, at least in modern times, there is no liquidation of any San Francisco companies, Chicago in the course of ninety days, and that is not a sum to cause inconvenience. It is within the range of probability that active men in Chicago, thrown out of business on the one side, and financial integrity surrounded by desolation and high rents, may, furnished with the cash of insurance, seek other localities. St. Louis, Omaha, and our own San Francisco, which since the opening of the railroad, has with its resources, capabilities and climate, become favorably known to our Chicago neighbors, may afford an asylum. It is to be observed that the destruction of accumulated capital, although a loss, does not affect the property of the firms, the mines, the work-shops go on by their usual results and the lost property is speedily replaced.—*Alta*, Oct. 11.

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